



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011447

Address: 208 N. 85th St.

Applicant: Miller Hull Architecture for Taproot Theater

Date of Meeting: Monday, December 13, 2010

Board Members Present: Mark Brands (Chair)
Bill Singer
Jean Morgan
Mike Delilla
Ted Panton

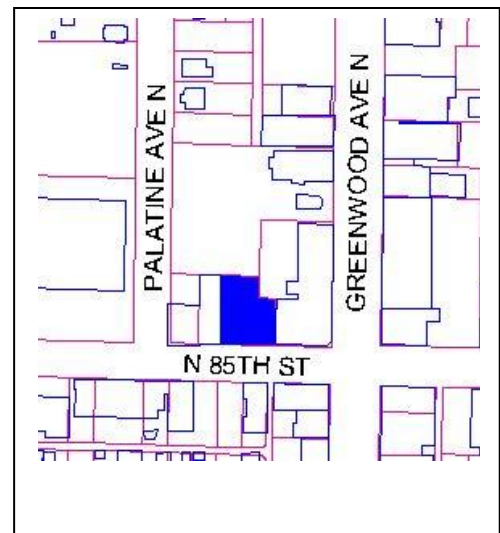
DPD Staff Present: Scott Kemp

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: NC2 P 65

Nearby Zones: (North) NC2 P 65)
(South) NC2 P 40
(East) NC2 P 65
(West) C1 40

Lot Area: 9070 sq ft



Current Development: Vacant land to the east of existing Taproot Theatre.

Access: By easement to the north end of the property.

Surrounding Development: Store front commercial along N. 85th St.

ECAs: Peat Settlement Area.

Neighborhood Character: Pedestrian oriented retail and restaurants in commercial core of Greenwood. Greenwood Ave. and to some extent N. 85th St. are vibrant pedestrian retail and restaurant streets in with storefronts along the sidewalk edges in buildings constructed during the streetcar era of development. The subject site is vacant as the result of an arson attack and forms one of the few gaps in the storefront pattern. The pattern continues for some distance to the north and south. To the east and west the pattern of buildings closely positioned to public sidewalks transitions to a pattern with parking along the street within two blocks.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal would add approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of space to the existing Taproot Theatre. The new space would be used for a scene shop, storage, rehearsal space, offices, meeting space and a café serving guests at theatre productions. The new structure would be two stories tall at N. 85th St.

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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Three, alternative design schemes were presented. All of the options included a storefront configuration along N. 85th St. Each one differed in the location of the interior two story theatre rehearsal and shop spaces with the preferred one placing them on the central north/south axis. The preferred scheme had a second story outdoor roof deck behind a street front façade which provides the appearance of a second story across the width of the site and has unglazed, punched window openings into the front deck area.

In the preferred option a sidewalk canopy is shown over the lobby entrance area, but not along the full frontage of the proposed building. Landscaping is proposed around the base of existing street trees and on the second story deck, visible through the open “window punch” elements in

the façade across the deck area. Additional planted material might be incorporated into the top of canopies over sidewalk areas. The applicants stated they thought patrons were in danger of walking into the busy street and that they are exploring the idea of a low railing separating the curb from the sidewalk.



PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public attended this Early Design Review meeting. Written comment, received after the meeting, pointed out that the Greenwood-PHinney Neighborhood Design Guidelines contain in Guideline A-2 states that sidewalks along N. 85th Street should have a minimum 12 foot width. The letter also mentions the potential peat layer beneath the site, the visibility of the north elevation will from redeveloped areas to the north, and a street drainage problem in front of the site creating a “permapuddle” causing repeated splashing across the sidewalk during wet periods.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

A. Site Planning

- A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics.** The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

Numerous east-west streets offer excellent views of Green Lake, Puget Sound and the Olympic and Cascade Mountains from Greenwood Avenue North. Where possible buildings should be located to take advantage of these views and to enhance views from the public right-of-way. Examples of methods to do this include setbacks from view corridors, landscape elements and street trees to frame views rather than block them, and pedestrian spaces with views of the water and mountains.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed existing context with storefronts along N. 85th St. on either side of this infill site and the need to provide an attractive north façade as it will be visible from areas to the north.

- A-2 Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. Reinforcement of Commercial and Residential Development Patterns:** Commercial development in the Greenwood/Phinney corridor has historically been oriented toward the street, with buildings up against the sidewalks. Most residential developments have modest landscaped setbacks and first floors are built slightly above grade to allow for privacy and a sense of transition from the street. Continuing this pattern will reinforce the character of both the business districts and residential areas.

Build commercial development up to the sidewalk where possible. Along North/ Northwest 85th Street, new commercial buildings should be set back sufficiently to provide 12-foot minimum sidewalks (including street trees and other plantings). Commercial buildings may be setback off the street if pedestrian-oriented space is provided that is enhanced with humanizing components such as trees and other plants, site furnishings and high-quality, well-detailed pavements between the sidewalk and the building.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need to see the proposal in its street front context with buildings on either side, requesting this graphic information be presented at the next meeting.

The Board was **not** made aware of an element of the Greenwood/Phinney Design Guidelines calling for 12 foot minimum width sidewalks along N. 85th Street..

The Board indicated support for a barrier protecting pedestrians from traffic on N. 85th St. and encouraged the applicants to contact SDOT on this issue.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that this guideline has applicability.

A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated the importance of this guideline.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. Signage:** The design and placement of signs plays an important role in the visual character and identity of the community. Key aspects of this effort are to ensure that the signs are at an appropriate scale and fit in with the building’s architecture and the local district. Small signs are encouraged in the building’s architecture, along a sign band, on awnings or marquees, located in windows or hung perpendicular to the building façade. The following signs are generally discouraged:
 - Large illuminated box (back-lit “can”) signs, unless they are treated or designed to be compatible with the character of surrounding development. Back-lit awnings should be limited to one horizontal-mounted lighting tube. Small neon signs are an alternative as long as they are unintrusive to adjacent residences.
 - Pole-mounted signs. Small monument signs are encouraged as part of low walls screening parking and abutting pedestrian-oriented space. Design should not present a visibility problem to a driver, pedestrian or bicyclist.
- B. Façade Articulation and Modulation:** Façade articulation and modulation in the Greenwood/Phinney Ridge Planning Area are most critical in multi-family residential buildings. Use of façade articulation and architectural elements is encouraged to make new construction compatible with the surrounding architectural context. Architectural

features such as those listed below can add further interest to a building, and lend buildings a human scale:

- Pitched roof
- Covered front porch
- Vertically proportioned windows
- Window trim and eave boards

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed how the proposal must fit well within the existing context. They asked that materials for the next meeting include the nearby buildings to show this relationship.

The Board members considered the location of signage on the proposed building to be important. It indicated they would like to see how signage would be incorporated. The Board would said it would like to see how the canopy extent proposed would fit into the existing context.

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.** Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. Architectural Styles:** The Greenwood Avenue North/Phinney Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street corridors are characterized by their utilitarian, non-flamboyant, traditional architectural styles (except for churches). Some important points to consider in making new development consistent and compatible with existing development include:
- small-scale architectural details at the ground level, including color, texture/patterns, materials, window treatment, sculptural elements, etc;
 - landscaping is an important component of the overall character, particularly for residential development; and
 - personalization of individual businesses is a key feature of both corridors.
- B. Building Entrances:** Almost all of the existing buildings located at corners along the Greenwood Avenue North/Phinney Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street corridors have entrances at the corner. Even when the principal off-street parking areas are located on the side of the building, a primary building entrance should be located at the corner. This concept is consistent with traditional neighborhood commercial designs and important in facilitating pedestrian activity at the street corners.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the likelihood the rear, north elevation of the proposed building would be visible from publicly accessible areas and indicated that it should be designed in a manner similar in detail, interest and style to the south, street-facing façade. They indicated that some high windows into the building would be appropriate on the north façade.

- C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.**

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

New multi-story developments should consider methods to coordinate a building's upper and lower stories. The parts should function as a composition—not necessarily requiring the top and bottom to be the same or similar.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated that this guideline has application to the proposal.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.**

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

New buildings should feature durable, attractive and well-detailed finish materials. Examples of structures in the neighborhood that feature desirable exterior finish materials are provided in the Appendix.

- A. Building Materials in the Greenwood Avenue North/Phinney Avenue North and North/Northwest 85th Street Corridors :** Again, buildings within these corridors are characterized by their utilitarian, non-flamboyant, traditional architectural styles. Brick is the most common surface treatment in the commercial areas and should be encouraged. Plastic awnings should be strongly discouraged. As an alternative, architectural canopies are encouraged to provide weather protection and a place for business signage.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated importance of the materials proposed and of their detailing. They indicated they would like color and materials to be shown to them at the next meeting.

D. Pedestrian Environment

- D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the**

weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

- A. **Pedestrian Open Spaces:** Small, usable open spaces are an important design objective. Open spaces incorporating the following features are encouraged with new commercial and mixed-use development:
 - Good sun exposure during most of the year
 - Located in areas with significant pedestrian traffic
 - Storefront and/or residential windows face onto open space, at or above the ground level
 - There are a variety of places to sit
 - Pedestrians have something to look at, whether it is a view of the street, landscaping, a mural, etc.
- B. **North/Northwest 85th Street Corridor and Greenwood Avenue North Corridor, North of North 87th Street:** New development should enhance the pedestrian environment and encourage pedestrian activity along the North/Northwest 85th Street corridor and the Greenwood Avenue North corridor, north of North 87th Street. The following measures should be encouraged:
 - Building entries facing the street
 - Pedestrian-oriented facades
 - Weather protection
 - Below-grade parking, when possible
- C. **Pedestrian Amenities:** When possible, new development should integrate pedestrian amenities including but not limited to street trees, pedestrian lighting, benches, newspaper racks, public art and bike racks to maintain and strengthen pedestrian activity.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the sidewalk area in front of the proposed building and how the building would relate to it. Directed that the area in front of the exit stairs should be transparent, allowing visibility into the building from the sidewalk.

- D-2 **Blank Walls.** Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

Greenwood/ Phinney-specific supplemental guidance:

Storefronts are encouraged to be located at the sidewalk edge, particularly in neighborhood commercial districts, and should be continuous, minimizing blank walls. Where unavoidable consider treating blank walls with one or more of the methods suggested in the Citywide Design Guidelines, including:

- installing vertical trellis in front of the wall with climbing vines or plant material;
- employing small setbacks;
- employing different texture, colors, or materials;
- providing art or murals.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need for active uses and avoidance of bland walls along N. 85th St. It stated that there should not be a blank wall and/or blank door where the exit stairs are located on the south wall.

D-9 Commercial Signage. Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board requested that the applicants show how signage would be incorporated into the proposed building.

D-10 Commercial Lighting. Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board discussed the need to incorporate lighting in a way which provides night time interest. This would be particularly important in areas visible from N. 85th St. like the roof deck and visible exit stairway as well as the canopy element.

D-11 Commercial Transparency. Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board indicated this guideline is applicable.

E. Landscaping

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

At the Early Design Guidance Meeting, the Board stated that the use of landscape to enhance the building would be important and should be shown in detail at the recommendation meeting.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance meeting, no development standard departures were requested.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EDG meeting, the Board recommended the project should move forwards to MUP Application in response to the guidance provided at this meeting.

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